

REVIEW ESSAY

African American Historians of Education and the Griot's Craft: A Historiography

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Abstract

This article provides a historiographical survey of significant African American historians researching, writing, and interpreting Black people's education history. At the heart of this article are the following questions: Who were the African American historians of education who produced this work? What has been the significant scholarship of African American education historians from the late nineteenth century to the present? Although much scholarship has been published on African American education, its history remains underrepresented in the study of educational history. Nonetheless, this historiography is burgeoning thanks to Black educational historians' scholarship.

Keywords: African American education; education historiography; Black teachers; Black principals

The history of African American education represents the quintessential struggle for freedom and equality in the United States. From the time Africans landed on the shores of America in 1619 to the present, Blacks have fought epic battles for the “freedom to learn.”¹ The historical fight for Black education and schooling is embodied in Blacks' pursuit of literacy during slavery, their establishment of schools in the post-bellum period, and their quest for an optimal educational model. Across time, Blacks' petitions have addressed equitable educational funding, the right to develop their own education and schools, the ability to attend school where they wanted, and the employment of African American teachers and principals. Blacks' educational strivings are historical as well as contemporary, as the struggle to obtain equitable educational access and opportunities continues.²

¹W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Freedom to Learn,” in *W. E. B. Du Bois Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 228–34.

²Thomas L. Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831–1865* (New York; W. W. Norton, 1978); Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (1988; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Adah Ward Randolph, “Building Upon Cultural Capital: Thomas Jefferson Ferguson and

Although much scholarship has been published on African American education, the history of Black education remains underrepresented in the study of educational history. Nonetheless, Black historians of education from W. E. B. Du Bois in the late nineteenth century to a new generation of contemporary historians have endeavored to illuminate Blacks' historical pursuit of education and schooling. Their scholarship has established a burgeoning historiography of African American education.

A few historians have written outstanding historiographies of African American education.³ None of these historiographies, however, focused exclusively on African American historians of education. This article provides a historiographical survey of African American historians researching, writing, and interpreting Blacks' education history. At the heart of this article are the following questions: Who were the African American historians of education who produced this work? What has been some of the significant scholarship of African American education historians from the late nineteenth century to the present? This article examines the scholarship of noted African American education historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and Horace Mann Bond, as well as the current generation of African American historians such as Crystal Sanders, Michelle Purdy, Elizabeth Todd-Breland, Jarvis Givens, Eddie Cole, Kabria Baumgartner, Michael Hines, Vincent Willis, and others. In uncovering African American education history, these African American scholars have focused on the role of racial uplift and self-determination in securing educational resources; the significance of literacy in African American communities; the social, political, and economic context of Black education, Black teachers, and principals; and the role of culture in establishing, maintaining, and sustaining African American educational institutions.

The objective of chronicling African Americans' contributions to historical scholarship is not new. In 1958, the renowned Black historian Earl E. Thorpe observed that the "literature on American historiography has had almost nothing to say about black historians."⁴ In *Black Historians: A Critique*, Thorpe asserted that Blacks studied Black history to document and address the plethora of issues confronting Black people. In this article, we observe that Black historians of education have also focused on issues of race and racism that confront Black communities. When reconstructing past

the Albany Enterprise Academy in Southeast Ohio: 1863-1886," *Journal of African American History* 87, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 182-95.

³See Ronald E. Butchart, "'Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World': A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), 333-66; Dionne Danna, Michelle A. Purdy, and Christopher M. Span, eds., *Using Past as Prologue: Contemporary Perspectives on African American Educational History* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers, 2015); V. P. Franklin and James D. Anderson, eds., *New Perspectives on Black Educational History* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978); Adah Ward Randolph, "African American Education History: A Manifestation of Faith," *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 1-18; Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South: 1940-1960," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2001), 751-79; Dionne Danna and Michelle A. Purdy, "Introduction: Historical Perspectives on African American Education, Civil Rights, and Black Power," *Journal of African American History* 100, no. 4 (Fall 2015), 573-85; Michael Hines and Thomas Fallace, "Pedagogical Progressivism and Black Education: A Historiographical Review, 1880-1957," *Review of Educational Research* 20, no. 10 (2022), 1-33.

⁴Earl E. Thorpe, *Black Historians: A Critique* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1971), v.

events, African American historians of education have their own lived experience with schooling and education as a point of reference. Historian Darlene Clark Hine's statement is illustrative: "If black Americans were to be taught 'our true history' then obviously someone would have to research and write it. I had found my role in the Black struggle; I would become a historian."⁵

This article extends Thorpe's mission of chronicling Black historians' work, but in the field of history of education. To that end, we use the African griot as a guiding framework. The griot is a real-world storyteller and keeper of history. Although the term *griot* is likely derived from the French word *guirot*, the griot is widely accepted among the general populace as an African storyteller, musician, poet, and historian who passes on knowledge of the village from one generation to the next. Griots gather their history through the oral tradition, seldom recording their history in written form.⁶ Like the griot, African American historians of education have sought to tell stories about the education of Black people, with the intention of transferring knowledge from generation to generation while positioning themselves as part of an ongoing history of Black people. Their role, like that espoused by Darlene Clark Hine, has been to elucidate "true Black history" while responding to the challenges in the education of Black people.

In this article, we focus primarily on the work of Black historians of education who have actively participated in the field of history of education in educational research or academic organizations (i.e., the History of Education Society, American Education Research Association, and Association for the Study of African American Life and History). We limited our examination of scholarship principally to monographs and refereed journal articles.⁷ This historiography is highly selective, not comprehensive, reflecting for the most part the work by African American historians that, we believe, has influenced the field of African American education history.

Racial Uplift and Self-Determination

When professional historians emerged on the academic scene in the 1890s, the US was rabid with views regarding the myth of Black inferiority. Fewer than four decades removed from slavery, African Americans found themselves physically free but still engaged in a heated battle of ideas that designated them as inferior.⁸ Beliefs about progress and civilization created an academic ethos in which historians and the new fields of psychology and sociology sought to make sense of the status of the Negro. This perplexing "Negro problem," as politicians and the general populace characterized the issue, was a "problem" some progressive Whites believed could be solved through the new science and efficiency of the day. According to

⁵Darlene Clark Hine, "Reflections on Race and Gender Systems," in *Historians and Race: Autobiography and the Writing of History* ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Robert F. Himmelberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 55.

⁶See Thomas A. Hale, *Griots and Griottes: Masters of Words and Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 18-58, 358.

⁷Historians discussed in this article primarily received doctorates in education, and some received doctorates in history.

⁸George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 245-252.

historian George Fredrickson, many influential Whites believed the “Negro problem” would resolve itself because Blacks would become extinct within the early decades of the twentieth century. This view was promulgated by White social scientists and scholars of the time.⁹

Historians, both trained and untrained,¹⁰ assumed responsibility for studying the historical roots of the “Negro problem.” One of the most significant of the trained historians was Columbia University’s William Dunning. Dunning and others argued that Reconstruction was primarily a failure resulting from meddling Northerners and incompetent Black politicians. Black historians, however, responded to this call to address the status of African Americans in the American social order. They responded by producing monographs on Black history as well as scholarship that addressed how Blacks sought to improve their condition before and after enslavement ended. Even though the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterized as “the Nadir,” one of the most prolific scholars who was not primarily an education historian—but who wrote about Black education—was W. E. B. Du Bois.¹¹

After completing his PhD in history at Harvard in 1895, W. E. B. Du Bois’s first major research project was a sociohistorical study of Black life in Philadelphia. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899) blended social science and historical methods to create a well-grounded analysis of the status of Blacks in work, social life, education, marriage, health, family life, and other areas. Regarding education, chapter 8 of the work, entitled “Education and Illiteracy,” identified several educational issues that stifled Negro uplift. This short chapter, taken with the other chapters of the study, provided a balanced critique of Blacks’ experience in Philadelphia based on a synthesis of historical and social scientific data. Du Bois argued that while Black illiteracy remained a problem, irregular school attendance and poverty hindered efforts to ameliorate the conditions of Blacks. Drawing on the notion of race uplift and the progressive language and idealism of the time, Du Bois called for Blacks to solve many of their problems themselves.¹² Optimistic about the potential of science to address the “Negro Problem,” he did not emphasize institutional racism as the only impediment to Black progress, even though he examined segregated education. On the contrary, he attributed some of the illiteracy of Blacks in Philadelphia to the Black community itself, stating, “The only difficulties in the matter of education are carelessness in school attendance, and poverty which keeps children out of school.”¹³ Viewed through a contemporary lens, *The Philadelphia Negro* employed methods that were clearly in their infancy. Nevertheless, the study represented

⁹Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 245-252; Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954).

¹⁰By “trained historian,” we mean historians who received their training and terminal degrees in history departments or other departments that provided training in historical methods.

¹¹Thomas C. Holt, “W. E. B. Du Bois, Historian,” in *The Oxford Handbook of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Aldon Morris et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190062767.013.8>; Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (New York: De Capo Press, 1997), 79-96; Butchart, “Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World.”

¹²W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, PA: Ginn & Co., 1899), 95-96.

¹³Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, 95-96.

what for its time were extraordinary feats of social science research supported by historical research, and it influenced subsequent generations of African American historians.¹⁴

Still, Du Bois ushered in the field of African American education history with his studies on *The College-Bred Negro* (1900), *The Negro Common School* (1901), *The College-Bred Negro American* (1910), and *The Common School and the Negro American* (1911). These reports were part of a series known as the Atlanta University Studies that Du Bois conducted between 1899 and 1914. They were influenced by Du Bois's training as a social scientist and were similar in tone to his chapter on education in *The Philadelphia Negro*. *The College-Bred Negro*, the fifth study in the series, emerged in the midst of Du Bois's calls for the talented tenth to "uplift the race," or elevate Blacks to their rightful place among other races. Du Bois noted his methods "to distribute among a number of selected persons throughout the South, carefully prepared schedules [surveys]. Care is taken to make the questions few in number, simple and direct, and as far as possible, inescapable of misapprehension."¹⁵ Du Bois noted the surveys were sent primarily to well-educated Blacks who were longtime residents of their communities. These residents, he imagined, would eventually comprise a group of skillful researchers who would gather information about the status of Black education for Du Bois in their communities. *The College-Bred Negro* is full of data about the education of Blacks, and it is clear Du Bois not only sought to work as a social scientist and historian of education, but also sought to create an archive of information about African American education that could be used by future generations of historians.

Du Bois followed *The College-Bred Negro* with *The Negro Common School*, which included an examination of Black teachers. In the study, Du Bois contended that African American education primarily served the purpose of developing teachers. Despite this focus, he observed the teachers were not adequately trained, and as a result, Negro education was inadequate. As a historian, Du Bois went beyond merely reporting facts, using history to discern the problems as well as the needs of Black teachers, to investigate where teachers were educated, and the need for Black teachers. As with most of Du Bois's historical scholarship, this study focused on both the past and present and sought to inform the practices that would be implemented to improve the education of Black teachers.¹⁶

While not a historical study, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) provided an important historical perspective on the education of Blacks in the early 1900s. "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" and "Of the Training of Black Men" were two of its most informative chapters on the education of Black people. These chapters argued for an

¹⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro Common School* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1901), and Du Bois, *The Common School and the Negro American* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1911). For examples of the influence of *The Philadelphia Negro* on historians, including African American historians V. P. Franklin, Tera Hunter, and Thomas Holt, see Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds. *W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

¹⁵W. E. B. Du Bois, *The College-Bred Negro* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1900), 10, and Du Bois, *The Negro Common School*.

¹⁶Du Bois, *The College-Bred Negro* and *The Negro Common School*.

optimal education model for Black education and leadership. Educator and historian Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South*, published in 1892, preceded *Souls* and offered a similar analysis. Cooper would later earn her PhD at the Sorbonne in 1925, writing her dissertation on the French African slave trade. Yet, *A Voice from the South* provided insights about the education of Black women in the late 1800s. In her chapter "The Higher Education of Women," Cooper criticized the way women were being educated as subordinates to men. She argued women, particularly African American women involved in race uplift, should be educated to complement the work of men. By the standards of her time, Cooper's views were quite radical, as her advocacy of women as men's equals challenged prevailing notions that women's primary role should be as child bearers.¹⁷

One of the most significant African American historians to write about African American education during the first half of the twentieth century was Carter G. Woodson. A former classroom teacher in Virginia, Woodson was the second Black student to graduate with a PhD from Harvard. He was trained in the scientific method of historical research and his work was integrally connected to curriculum and pedagogy.¹⁸ In 1915, he founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and in 1916, he established the *Journal of Negro History*.¹⁹ Woodson believed that educating Blacks about their history required an organization established for that specific purpose. A testament to his role as a teacher/historian was his seminal textbook, *The Negro in Our History* (1922). Black history education scholar LaGarrett King wrote that *The Negro in Our History* was "the most widely used survey textbook about the African-American historical experience until the late 1940s."²⁰

In 1919 Woodson published *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861*, a seminal work in the history of African American education. The book was published by Woodson-founded Associated Publishers. Like Du Bois's sociohistorical studies on education, *The Education of the Negro* reflected a more traditional approach to historical methodology.²¹ Woodson's scholarship, like that of Du Bois, was built upon the work of George Washington Williams, who wrote *A History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880*.²² Consequently, Woodson assembled an impressive

¹⁷Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 48-79; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; repr., New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

¹⁸Jarvis R. Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

¹⁹Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (1922; repr., Andesite Press, 2015). For a comprehensive analysis of Woodson's scholarship, see Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). See also Milton Gaither, *American Educational History Revisited* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003), 108-20.

²⁰LaGarrett J. King, "When Lions Write History: Black History Textbooks, African-American Educators, & the Alternative Black Curriculum in Social Studies Education, 1890-1940," *Multicultural Education* 22, no. 1 (Fall 2014), 6.

²¹Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861: A History of the Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War* (1919; repr., New York: A&B Books Publishers, 1992).

²²See Maghan Keita, *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). George Washington Williams, *A History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883), 64.

array of primary sources to construct a very persuasive argument that Blacks have always viewed education as a means of liberation.²³

Woodson was one of the primary progenitors of the “race uplift” and self-determination promoted by African American educators of the day, and *The Education of the Negro* falls clearly within this philosophy. Woodson sought to illuminate for Blacks the types of education available to them, while at the same time conveying the importance of education and literacy. The book is noteworthy not only as a piece of progressive history, but also for its meticulous research and creative use of sources. For instance, Woodson used newspapers, government reports, travel logs, and a plethora of archival sources reflecting the emergence of social science research of the time. Two years later, Woodson published *Early Negro Education in West Virginia*. Both books argued that Blacks, free or enslaved, provided the impetus for their own educational strivings.²⁴

This early period of African American education history written by African American scholars focused on racial uplift against a backdrop of White supremacy. Consequently, Du Bois’s and Woodson’s scholarship stood in stark contrast to the milieu of their period. Their goal was to uncover and highlight African American efforts to acquire education as a means of racial uplift and self-determination. In essence, they focused on the contributions of Blacks as a means of racial pride and fortitude. The next period of African American education scholars—while building upon this tradition—moved beyond it to address not just the accomplishments but the system that Blacks struggled against to obtain community literacy and liberation for the entire race.²⁵

From the New Negro to the Civil Rights Era

The 1920s through the 1950s marked a progressive period in African American educational history. During this period, philosopher Alain Locke helped usher in the New Negro Literary Movement. In his famous book *The New Negro*, he issued a call for Blacks to unshackle themselves from the “Old Negro” and chart a new course, culturally and socially grounded in the idea that Blacks should determine their own political agendas. Consequently, this period of education history by African American historians illuminated the structural impediments to Black progress and continued to chronicle their achievements despite those obstacles. Moreover, their scholarship addressed the impact of the political, social, cultural, and economic systems and how they hampered African American educational attainment.²⁶

While not a historical study, Woodson’s *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933) stands as an excellent example of an African American historian serving as a public intellectual.²⁷ What makes *Mis-Education* so appealing to many readers was the

²³Woodson, *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861*.

²⁴Woodson, *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861*.

²⁵Carter G. Woodson, “Early Negro Education in West Virginia,” *Journal of Negro History* 7, no. 1 (Jan. 1922), 23-63.

²⁶Alain Locke, ed. *The New Negro* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 3-16.

²⁷We define “Black public intellectuals” as African Americans, formally or informally educated, who write and speak about issues relating to the Black experience in the US and abroad and about contemporary issues of their day. Black public intellectuals typically engage with the public via the media platforms of

book's ability to speak in direct, pragmatic language that people from Woodson's time to our own can understand. Woodson insisted that Blacks access and use education appropriately, for gaining the necessary practical skills for making a living, and not to eschew such opportunities. During this period, as part of the larger critical discourse taking place, the book provided a foundation on which future historians of education could approach their work. They could draw from the book the need to critique the past and current educational system, evaluate the curricula of African American students, and offer suggestions for improving the education of Blacks. *Mis-Education* is not an example of empirical historical scholarship, but it has served and continues to serve as a guidepost for thinking about the purposes of education for Black people.²⁸

Two years after the publication of *Mis-Education*, Du Bois offered a novel and innovative response to the Dunning school's historiography of Reconstruction with his book *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Du Bois challenged the Dunning School's notion that Black politicians' incompetence was largely responsible for the mismanagement of government in the South during Reconstruction. Through mostly secondary sources, the book brilliantly refuted the arguments of the Dunningites. It utilized a Marxist interpretation of Reconstruction while foregrounding race and racism as tools used by White elites to prevent poor Blacks and Whites from uniting. The challenge faced by Blacks who sought to acquire an education was their poor White counterparts viewed education as a luxury. Despite little or no demand for education from poor Whites, Du Bois noted, Blacks insisted on obtaining education, establishing their own schools with the help of the American Missionary Society and other philanthropic agencies. Du Bois credited Blacks with leading the charge to provide education for all citizens, noting, "The first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the state, in the South, came from Negroes."²⁹ His words challenged the argument that Reconstruction was a failure and called on African American historians to excavate the narrative of Blacks' historical quest for education in the US.

In his chapter "Founding the Public School," Du Bois examined public education during the postbellum period. He argued:

If the Negro public school system had been sustained, guided and supported, the American Negro today would equal Denmark in literacy. As it is, he surpasses Spain and Italy, the Balkans and South America; and this is due to the Negro college, which despite determined effort to curtail the efficiency of the Negro public school, and despite a sustained and violent attack upon higher education for black folk, nevertheless, through white Northern philanthropy and black

their time. Woodson's many scholarly publications and textbooks and his institutional work with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History made him, arguably, the "expert" Black person on life and history during his day. For a discussion of Black public intellectuals, see Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Public Intellectuals: From Du Bois to the Present," *Contexts* 4, no. 4 (Nov. 2005), 22-27.

²⁸Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933; repr., Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008).

²⁹W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 638-641.

Southern contributions, survived and furnished teachers and leaders for the Negro race at the time of its greatest crisis.³⁰

According to Du Bois, prior to Blacks' demands for education, there were two obstacles to free public education: property owners were unwilling to be taxed to fund public schools, and White workers themselves did not demand free public education.³¹

Although *Black Reconstruction* was not a history of Black education, Du Bois's most notable chapter, "The Propaganda of History," presented a penetrating critique of Black and White history as presented in US textbooks and curricula. Du Bois argued that the average American college student educated in elementary and secondary teaching would learn that the "Constitution recognized slavery," and "That Reconstruction was a disgraceful attempt to subject white people to ignorant Negro rule."³² Hence, Du Bois's work established an accurate portrayal of the African American educational experience within the racist structure of American society. Following Du Bois during this period was another significant education historian, Horace Mann Bond, who addressed the systemic education of Blacks specifically with regard to students living in a southern state.

Horace Mann Bond was very much influenced by the ethos of his time. At the University of Chicago, he initially was interested in obtaining his PhD in psychology, but then changed his academic focus and is today commonly recognized as one of the first (if not the first) African American trained in the history of education. His dissertation on African American education in Alabama won the Rosenberger Award for best dissertation in 1936.³³

At the University of Chicago, Bond was influenced by sociologist Robert Park and studied psychology and education, producing a social scientific framework that underpinned much of his work. His dissertation would become a published book titled *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel*—a masterful work of empirical social science history. The first paragraph of chapter 1 revealed the social and theoretical lens of the study:

The public school in Alabama is a social institution. It is the product of a variety of forces, set in motion by human beings equipped with a social heritage, and reacting to a particular kind of natural and physical environment. An understanding of the consequences of these forces requires a knowledge, comprehensive and detailed, of the forces themselves, and of their interactions.³⁴

³⁰Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 637.

³¹Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 641.

³²Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 713.

³³Wayne J. Urban, *Black Scholar: Horace Mann Bond, 1904-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 24-36, 83. "Background on Horace Mann Bond," *Horace Mann Bond Papers*, University of Massachusetts Amherst, <http://findingaids.library.umass.edu/ead/mums411>. Bond had not completed enough undergraduate history credits to be admitted to the history PhD program. Thus, he entered the PhD program in education. However, because of the fluidity of the disciplines at Chicago in the early 1900s—a fluidity that continues today—Bond gained access to history faculty, took history courses, and received thorough training in history.

³⁴Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (1939; repr., Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 1. See also Wayne J. Urban, "Review of Negro Education in Alabama," *History of Education Quarterly*, 7, no. 3 (Fall 1987), 366-77.

Bond's earlier published work, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*, was significant as well. The book challenged the notion of his namesake, Horace Mann, who contended education was the great equalizer. For Horace Mann Bond, education perpetuated and maintained social hierarchies and thus was not a panacea for African Americans. Bond wrote, "Strictly speaking, the school has never built a new social order; it has been the product and interpreter of the existing system, sustaining and being sustained by the social complex."³⁵ Bond explicated how the system of White supremacy was perpetuated through American education and schooling.

Today, Bond is remembered as the president of historically Black colleges and universities, a race man of the people, and the father of noted civil rights activist Julian Bond. During the 1930s and 1940s, Bond was one of the most influential historians of education owing to his academic training in education and history and the interdisciplinary nature of his work. Bond's scholarship represented a shift from telling the story of education to extolling how education has been denied because of structural inequities and racist ideology about the purpose of education for Black people.

In 1932, educator and social scientist Charles H. Thompson started the *Journal of Negro Education*. Despite its focus on contemporaneous educational issues, *JNE* introduced the academic community to a great deal of scholarship in the history of Black education. The journal produced historical essays and reflections on contemporary African American education written by African American education historians and scholars. As a result, Thompson facilitated the growth and visibility of the field of African American education history.³⁶

In 1941, Marion Thompson Wright published *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, which represented a move away from the primary focus of African American education: the South. Wright was the first African American woman to receive a PhD from Teachers College at Columbia University in 1940. Like the writings of Horace Mann Bond and other historians of education, Wright's research was thorough and displayed an awareness of contemporary educational issues in the Black community.³⁷ Her book on Black education in New Jersey was actually her dissertation topic, which was suggested by Charles Thompson. Her study had a scientific tone and included extensive data reflecting the merging of the social sciences with history. *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey* remains the authoritative historical study of Black education in New Jersey.³⁸

The Black Freedom Struggle and Self-Determination

The civil rights movement and the freedom struggles of the 1950s through the 1970s tremendously influenced the field of history of education. In the field of history

³⁵Horace Mann Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order* (1934; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 13.

³⁶Katherine I. E. Wheatle, "Exploring the Context and Influences behind the Founding of the *Journal of Negro Education*, 1932–1933," *Journal of Negro Education* 86, no. 1, (Winter 2017), 3–12.

³⁷Marion Thompson Wright, *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941); Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 120.

³⁸See Graham Russell Gao Hodges, ed., *The Marion Thompson Wright Reader* (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 1–72.

proper, historians began to focus more on the histories of people and less on the teleological histories of “great men” and major historical events of previous decades. This “new history,” as it has been called, opened the field to new theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Historian Eric Foner noted that the “new histories” emphasized “the experiences of ordinary Americans, the impact of quantification and cultural analysis, the eclipse of conventional political and intellectual history.”³⁹

The late 1960s and 1970s were dominated by a new group of Black historians of education influenced by this “new history.” These historians moved away from the top-down intellectual and institutional history prevalent in the field in favor of producing monographs and syntheses of education and schooling from the bottom up. They focused on issues of race, class, gender, and inequality in education and examined the sociopolitical and economic factors that shaped educational reform.⁴⁰ This “new history” approach, however, was not new for African American historians of education, who had focused on such issues as far back as Du Bois and Woodson.

A key work in the field of history of education during the civil rights movement was Henry Allen Bullock’s *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present*, published in 1967. Trained as a sociologist at the University of Michigan, Bullock investigated the role of Black teachers in society. His work with teachers dated back to his involvement in teacher training in the 1930s. Bullock addressed the development of schools in the South, the architects of Black education reform, the challenges faced by Black schools, and the movement to change the social order, including the education system, and its purposes. The sociological influence on *A History of Negro Education* is evident. Yet, Bullock’s interpretations of the plethora of primary sources that he consulted resulted in him receiving the Bancroft Prize in American History for the book.⁴¹

Fifteen years after Du Bois’s death in 1963, on the heels of the Black Nationalist and Black Power movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, two young Black historians ushered in a new era of the African American historian of education. In 1978, V. P. Franklin and James Anderson published *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, which signaled not only a new direction in Black educational history, but also a conscious effort by Black educational historians to shape and lead the field. The volume emerged from a session held at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (formerly the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History) in 1976. Franklin and Anderson paid homage to African American educational historians before them, and dedicated their scholarship to Woodson, Horace Mann Bond, and Henry Bullock.⁴²

³⁹Eric Foner, introduction to *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), vii.

⁴⁰Ruben Donato and Marvin Lazerson, “New Directions in American Educational History: Problems and Prospects,” *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 8 (Nov. 2000), 4-15.

⁴¹Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). Naomi W. Ledé, “Henry Allen Bullock (1906-1973)” Texas Historical Association, updated September 8, 2020, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bullock-henry-allen>.

⁴²Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson, eds., *New Perspectives on Black Educational History* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1978), ix-x.

Franklin and Anderson represented the modern era of the African American historian of education. Franklin was trained in the history of education in the early 1970s at the University of Chicago, where Horace Mann Bond received his training. Around the same time, Anderson was under the mentorship of Paul Violas and Clarence Karier, renowned historians of education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.⁴³ Ultimately, Franklin and Anderson would have a profound impact on African American historians of education and train generations of them from the 1970s to the present. Franklin and Anderson rose to prominence alongside a group of “radical revisionist” historians that included Joel Spring, Michael Katz, and Clarence Karier. According to historian Sol Cohen, the radical revisionists “were eager to engage in political struggle and tried to balance a commitment to historical scholarship with a commitment to social and educational reconstruction.”⁴⁴ These historians attempted to bring to light the racism, sexism, classism, and bureaucratic systems that prevented the realization of a democratic education system. On his position as a revisionist, Franklin noted: “It was clear to me that the main purpose for publicly funded schooling, especially for African Americans, was social control.”⁴⁵ At the same time, he also pointed out that

in terms of my approach to educational research, I was a student of historian Lawrence A. Cremin who also became the president of Columbia University’s Teachers College. In the introduction to *The Education of Black Philadelphia* (1979), I make it clear that it is a “Creminesque” work in that I don’t just deal with formal schooling, but also informal schooling and community education as well.⁴⁶

Franklin’s first monograph, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: A Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950*, further established him as one of the leading African American historians of education and a rising star among the country’s young African American historians in general. Taking a methodological lead from Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* and conjoining it with the theoretical perspective of Horace Mann Bond, Franklin’s research demonstrated that education did not improve the condition of Blacks in Philadelphia between 1900 and 1950.⁴⁷ His thorough analysis represented the critical historical approach he would utilize throughout his career.

⁴³James D. Anderson, “Democratic Agitations: Transformation of a Critical Historian,” in *Inexcusable Omissions: Clarence Karier and the Critical Tradition of Education Scholarship*, ed. Karen Graves, Timothy Gladner, and Christine Shea (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 139-56.

⁴⁴Sol Cohen, *Challenging Orthodoxies: Toward a New Cultural History of Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 24.

⁴⁵Derrick P. Alridge, “On the Making of a Scholar Activist and Educational Historian: An Interview with V. P. Franklin,” *Journal of African American History* 102, no. 3 (Summer 2017), 354.

⁴⁶Alridge, “On the Making of a Scholar Activist and Educational Historian,” 354.

⁴⁷Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979). Also, see Franklin’s later work with Carter Savage. V. P. Franklin and Carter J. Savage, eds., *Cultural Capital and Black Education: African American Communities and the Funding of Black Schooling* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age, 2004).

Anderson contributed a great deal to the history of African American education. One of his pivotal early contributions appeared in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine. Anderson's chapter, "Secondary School History Textbooks and the Treatment of Black History," exemplified the Woodsonian and Du Boisian tradition of textbook analysis. He argued that history textbooks presented inaccurate information about Black history. This influential essay reflected the past and ongoing academic activism of African American historians of education regarding school curricula.⁴⁸

In *New Perspectives*, education historian Linda M. Perkins's scholarship in the chapter "Quaker Beneficence and Black Control: The Institute for Colored Youth, 1852-1903" represented a departure from previous scholarship, because it addressed two dual concepts: gender and race in education history. Moreover, her monograph *Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth* illuminated Coppin's personification of the "race woman," her work in the community to foster racial uplift and education, and her model of Black women's self-determination. Perkins was the contemporary of scholars such as Lillian Williams, Genna Rae McNeil, and Darlene Clark Hine, whose primary fields of study were Black women and not African American educational history. Perkins's research on Coppin and her subsequent work has served as a model of intellectual biographies of African American female educators.⁴⁹ The work of African American historians and historians of education was facilitated by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and Woodson's work in both fields helped create an infrastructure to foster this research.

As the focus on self-determination in Black education gained momentum, Donald Spivey published *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915* in 1978. Influenced by Woodson's research, Spivey sought to provide a concise critical analysis of the education of Blacks from the postbellum period through the first decade of the twentieth century. He argued that the purpose of industrial education was to train Blacks to provide menial labor in the South. Former northern general Samuel Armstrong and Booker T. Washington were the central figures in his work. Armstrong, Spivey argued, viewed Blacks as inferior to Whites and believed they were incapable of governing themselves. He contended that Blacks were a source of cheap labor for the South; thus, their education should appropriately prepare them for this function. Although Spivey's study was controversial when it appeared in 1978, we maintain that his arguments have stood the test of time and are widely accepted among historians of education.⁵⁰

Monographs by V. P. Franklin, Linda Perkins, and Donald Spivey, along with articles by James Anderson, helped set the stage for Anderson's magisterial *The*

⁴⁸James D. Anderson, "Secondary School History Textbooks and the Treatment of Black History," in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 253-274.

⁴⁹Linda M. Perkins, *Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902* (New York: Garland, 1987). Perkins, "Quaker Beneficence and Black Control: The Institute for Colored Youth, 1852-1903" in *New Perspectives*, ed. Franklin and Anderson, 19-43.

⁵⁰Donald Spivey, *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915* (1978; repr., Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006), 13-41.

Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935. Anderson's book comprised the quintessential research of Black life. He meticulously documented Blacks' efforts to establish their own schools and control their education. Blacks, Anderson showed, possessed a strong desire for education that was liberatory and not controlled by Whites. When *The Education of Blacks in the South* was published in 1988, it earned the great respect of historians in all areas of the field. Thirty-five years after its publication, *The Education of Blacks in the South* continues to serve as the standard that historians of Black education strive for. The genesis of Anderson's book was a paper he wrote in a class with historian David Tyack. Encouragement to pursue the study of Black education in the South came from his mentors, historians Paul Violas and Clarence Karier. Anderson, himself, later trained generations of historians of the Black experience and profoundly influenced the field into the third decade of the twentieth-first century.⁵¹

Black Education, Teachers, and Educational Thought

After the blossoming of the field of Black education history in the 1970s and 1980s, the research of Anderson, Franklin, Perkins, and others provided the foundation for a new generation of scholars. As the twentieth century closed, African American historians of education trained in the 1990s joined their mentors to extend the scholarship in the field, revisit previous topics and approaches, and chart new courses. This generation of scholars offered studies on nineteenth-century education, curriculum, Black teachers, and the educational thought of Black thinkers.

One of the new Black historians of the period was Vanessa Siddle Walker. Her 1996 book, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, became a seminal work in the field. Studying the history of an all-Black school in Caswell County, North Carolina, from the 1940s through the 1960s, Walker's scholarship exemplified the self-determination themes embedded in the previous scholarship of Franklin and Anderson and was grounded in a self-empowerment motif based on history and culture. She argued that Black residents in Caswell County were quite proud of their segregated schools and pleased to control them. The result of such community control, Walker attested, was a school and curriculum undergirded by Black pride and autonomy among Blacks. Meticulously researched, Walker's study employed various methods including ethnography, oral history, and a social science approach. Some new scholars in the field have used this methodological stance, which departed from previous generations of historians of education that relied primarily on archival collections and documents.⁵²

In addition to Walker's work, there were other Black education historians who placed the examination of the lives of Black educators at the center of their research, thereby building upon the work of Perkins. For example, the work of Michael Fultz falls in this genre. His articles addressed the under-researched history of Black teachers. Three of his essays, "African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest," "African-American

⁵¹James D. Anderson, interview by Derrick P. Alridge, October 10, 2018, Charlottesville, VA,

⁵²Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Growth, Feminization, and Salary Discrimination,” and “Teacher Training and African American Education in the South, 1900-1940” (all published in 1995), remain the definitive historical works on African American teachers’ structural experiences in the South.⁵³ Clearly influenced by Bond, Fultz displayed a social science foundation that incorporated empirical data, tables, and concise descriptions. In an interview, Fultz articulated:

The historian who has had the most influence on my work is, without question, Horace Mann Bond. I did my Master’s paper on Bond, his early writings, 1924-1939, and discovering his work was a revelation in so many ways. Even apart from seeing a model of Black educational history done in exquisite detail and analysis . . .⁵⁴

Since the 1990s, Fultz has continued to add to his solid corpus of work on Black teachers and remains one of the authoritative historians on the topic.⁵⁵

In the early twenty-first century, Joy Ann Williamson-Lott produced two groundbreaking studies—*Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-75* and *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*—as part of the burgeoning scholarship on civil rights and Black Power taking place in the past two decades.⁵⁶ Williamson-Lott’s research epitomizes the theme of Black self-determination, but diverts from community or school studies to focus on the activism of college students. Her scholarship pushes the field to give greater attention to the history of Black higher education and educational reform.

Whereas Walker focuses on community education in the rural South, Adah Ward Randolph’s scholarship examines de facto segregation in the urban northern education system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ward Randolph’s research uncovers the role of race in curricula access, the establishment of schools, the hiring of teachers and principals, and the role of the community in creating good segregated schools in the urban North. With this focus, Ward Randolph continues the work of Franklin and Perkins in their focus on the topic.⁵⁷

⁵³Michael Fultz, “African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1995), 401-422; Michael Fultz, “African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Growth, Feminization, and Salary Discrimination,” *Teachers College Record* 96, no. 3 (March, 1995), 1-25; Michael Fultz, “Teacher Training and African American Education in the South, 1900-1940,” *Journal of Negro Education* 64, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 196-210.

⁵⁴Michael Fultz, email message to Derrick Alridge, February 25, 2014. Also, see Michael Fultz, “A ‘Quintessential American’: Horace Mann Bond, 1924-1939,” *Harvard Educational Review* 55, no. 4 (November 1985), 416-442.

⁵⁵See Michael Fultz, “Determination and Persistence: Building the African American Teacher Corps through Summer and Intermittent Teaching, 1960s-1890s,” *History of Education Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (Feb. 2021), 4-44.

⁵⁶Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Joy Ann Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008). Also, see Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018).

⁵⁷See Adah Ward Randolph, “The Memories of an All-Black Northern Urban School: Good Memories of Leadership, Teachers and Curriculum,” *Urban Education* 39, no. 6 (Nov. 2004), 596-620, and Adah Ward

In addition to the scholarship embedded in northern urban communities in the nineteenth and twentieth century, there is scholarship covering the educational experience of enslaved Africans. Heather Williams's *Self Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* is of this ilk. Though trained as a historian and lawyer, Williams has produced scholarship offering a thorough and painstaking examination of the education of enslaved Africans and freedpeople. Williams contends that Blacks during enslavement advocated for their education and self-determination despite the dangers they encountered from taking such a stance. Her arguments extend previous historians' contentions that Blacks demanded and established education for themselves. Williams's work, however, focuses almost exclusively on the education of slaves. Such a study was long overdue, as the last major monograph on the topic was Thomas Webber's *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community*, published nearly three decades earlier in 1978.⁵⁸

More recently, Hilary Greene, trained by Heather Williams, has produced a major work in nineteenth century black education. In 2016's *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890*, Green provides a case study of two Urban South cities: Richmond, VA and Mobile, AL to answer the question: "How did urban African Americans and their supporters create, develop, and sustain a system of education during the transition from slavery to freedom?"⁵⁹ The significance of this work lies in its departure from the usual declension narrative surrounding the African American experience in the post-Reconstruction era: Green examines the establishment of state-funded public schools of education for African Americans following the eradication of the Freedman's Bureau.

Another important African American historian of nineteenth-century education is Christopher Span. Span's *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1862-1875* extends the arguments of Black educational agency proposed by Du Bois, Anderson, and Williams. Span's work, however, focuses on the education of Blacks in Mississippi and thoroughly recounts how Blacks established an educational system before, during, and after Reconstruction as Whites sought to control the education of Blacks for their own means. Span's work is a response to the racist scholarship of the early twentieth century, and Span himself noted, "Late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century historians of this era and region felt it their duty to construct a past that rationalized the actions—

Randolph and Dawn V. Robinson, "De Facto Desegregation in the Urban North: Voices of African American Teachers and Principles on Employment, Students, and Community in Columbus, Ohio, 1940 to 1980," *Urban Education* 54, no. 10 (Dec. 2019), 1403-40. See also Adah Ward Randolph, "It is Better to Light a Candle Than to Curse the Darkness: Ethel Thompson Overby and Democratic Schooling in Richmond, Virginia: 1910-1958," *Educational Studies* 48, no. 3 (2012), 220-43; Adah Ward Randolph and Stephanie Sanders, "In Search of Excellence in Education: The Political, Academic, and Curricular Leadership of Ethel T. Overby," *Journal of School Leadership* 21, no. 4 (2011), 521-47; and Adah Ward Randolph and Dawn V. Robinson, "Teaching and Leading as a Principled Act: How Ethel T. Overby Built Foot Soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement, 1910-1957," in *Principled Resistance: How Teachers Solve Ethical Dilemmas*, ed. Doris A. Santoro and Lizabeth Cain (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018).

⁵⁸Heather A. Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁵⁹Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 2.

no matter how inhumane or unjustifiable—of white southerners and the overall subjugation of African Americans within an oppressive system of segregation known as Jim Crow.⁶⁰

Also contributing to scholarship on nineteenth-century African American education is Cally Waite with her book *Permission to Remain Among Us: Education for Blacks in Oberlin, Ohio, 1880-1914*, which examines the education of Blacks at Oberlin College. Historically, Oberlin has been viewed as an “interracial utopia.” However, Waite challenges this notion by documenting Oberlin’s struggle to maintain its founding principles of equality as its student population changed after the Civil War. In her epilogue, Waite observes that not until the years of the civil rights movement did Oberlin fully re-embrace its principles and abolitionist fervor and establish itself as the progressive institution it is today. Providing a case study of African American higher education in the North, Waite’s study is important in providing insight into challenges faced even by progressive northeastern universities.⁶¹

Although not a study of nineteenth-century Black education, Katrina Sanders’s “*Intelligent and Effective Direction*”: *The Fisk University Race Relations Institute and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1944-1969* takes up Waite’s focus on Blacks and higher education. Sanders examines sociologist Charles Johnson’s development and organization of a race relations institute at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee that served as a think tank and policy center to address issues of race and racism in the United States. Scholars, activists, and leaders from across the US participated in workshops and seminars and brainstormed ideas to dismantle Jim Crow. Sanders argues that Johnson believed that “education was the key to dealing with racial strife.”⁶² As such, educating Whites at the institute could offer information and narratives about Black people counter to those held in American society. Over two decades, the institute sought to provide such education to Whites and the larger US. Sanders argues that the institute was a vital space for activism from the pre-civil rights era through the civil rights movement.

Curriculum scholars have also offered robust historical studies on Black education; the late William Watkins was in the forefront of producing scholarship on curriculum. The most potent representation of that work, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954*, draws on critical theory and extensive archival research to comprehensively demonstrate how progressive White educators and philanthropists created an educational system designed to keep Blacks in a place of servitude. *White Architects* utilizes a biographical approach to extend the argument that Whites sought to control the education of Blacks for economic means.⁶³ Additionally, Haroon Kharem’s *A Curriculum of Repression: A*

⁶⁰Christopher M. Span, *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1862-1875* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 7.

⁶¹Cally L. Waite, *Permission to Remain Among Us: Education for Blacks in Oberlin, Ohio, 1880-1914* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 46.

⁶²Katrina M. Sanders, “*Intelligent and Effective Direction*”: *The Fisk University Race Relations Institute and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1944-1969* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 2.

⁶³William Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

Pedagogy of Racial History in the United States has gone largely unnoticed in the mainstream history of education community.⁶⁴ However, the book is a signature piece of history in Black Studies and the critical tradition. The chapter titles reveal Kharem's ideological approach: "Internal Colonialism: White Supremacy and Education," "White Supremacy's Politics of Culture and Exclusion," "The American Colonization Society," "The Pedagogy of Eugenics, Confronting Disparity in American Society." Kharem examines "the pedagogy of white supremacy in the United States" and how "White supremacist ideology has historically used education to instill children with the idea Americans are on a sacred mission to evangelize the world and economically control its resources."⁶⁵ Clearly, Kharem is influenced by the likes of Du Bois, Marimba Ani, Paulo Freire, and Joe Kincheloe.

During this new epoch of African American education history, intellectual history began to develop as a subfield. Unlike many intellectual histories of education of previous eras, Black intellectual historians of education in the first decade of the twenty-first century focused on issues of race and gender. One of the first scholars to publish a work in the twenty-first century focusing on ideas in African American education was Karen Johnson with her pivotal book *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational Philosophies and Social Activism of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs*. The concept of uplift in the thought of Black women educators was not new; however, Johnson's comparative study of Cooper and Burroughs was fresh and reflected twenty-first-century sensibilities. More recently, Johnson has coedited *African American Women Educators: A Critical Examination of Their Pedagogies, Educational Ideas, and Activism from the Nineteenth Century to the Mid-Twentieth Century*.⁶⁶

Stephanie Evans's much-needed and excellent *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* provided a foundational text that placed Black women squarely in the center of the history of American higher education. According to Evans, Black women have used higher education as a tool to deal with both racial and gender discrimination. *Black Women in the Ivory Tower* provided solid groundwork for subsequent scholarship in this area.⁶⁷

In addition to Evans, Derrick Alridge has provided scholarship in intellectual history. His 2007 article, "Of Victorianism, Civilizationism, and Progressivism: The Educational Ideas of Anna Julia Cooper and W. E. B. Du Bois, 1892-1940," engages the prevalence of conflict and dialectics in the thought of Cooper and Du Bois. The essay reveals the influence of Wilson Moses, who wrote about ideological "creative conflict" in the social thought of African American intellectuals.⁶⁸ A year later

⁶⁴The book was not reviewed in mainstream history of education journals or history journals, such as the *History of Education Quarterly*, *Journal of African American History*, *Journal of Negro Education*, and *American Education Research Journal*. See Haroon Kharem, *A Curriculum of Repression: A Pedagogy of Racial History in the United States* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

⁶⁵Kharem, *A Curriculum of Repression*, 5.

⁶⁶Karen Johnson, *Uplifting the Women and the Race: The Educational Philosophies and Social Activism of Anna Julia Cooper and Nannie Helen Burroughs* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000).

⁶⁷Stephanie Y. Evans, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

⁶⁸Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Alridge published *The Educational Thought of W. E. B. Du Bois: An Intellectual History* (2008). More recently, Alridge has employed oral history approaches in examining the thought of Black educators during the civil rights era.⁶⁹

In 2012, historian Louis Ray delivered his first of two intellectual biographies of *Journal of Negro Education* founder Charles H. Thompson. In *Charles H. Thompson: Policy Entrepreneur of the Civil Rights Movement* (2012), Ray introduces Thompson as an educator, historian, and businessman who from the beginning of the civil rights era used his skills to shape the movement. Drawing on archival materials, Ray constructs a biography that transcends the technocratic image often associated with Thompson. Nearly a decade later, he followed up with *Charles H. Thompson on Desegregation, Democracy, and Education: 1953-1963* (2020). Ray's biographies of Thompson are largely unknown, but they offer a deep examination of a largely unrecognized educator and historian.⁷⁰

In the past fifteen years, scholarship on Black teachers has continued to blossom. Historian Sonya Ramsey's *Reading, Writing, and Segregation: A Century of Black Women Teachers in Nashville* explores the "working and personal lives of black urban teachers" from the early Jim Crow era through *Brown v. Board of Education*.⁷¹ Focusing on Black women teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, Ramsey meticulously documents how these teachers disproved the prevailing notion of the uneducated rural Black teacher. She also illuminates the middle-class urban lives of Black women teachers in Nashville and reveals how teachers participated in the civil rights movement as organizers and advocates of democracy and equality. Ramsey astutely draws on a plethora of archival materials and uses oral history to provide a tightly constructed narrative of Black teachers. Her study has been widely cited by historians writing about Black teachers.⁷²

Black teachers are also the focus of historian Tondra Loder-Jackson. Combining scholarship on Black teachers and the Black freedom struggle, her work challenges part of the civil rights movement's master narrative that suggested teachers were apolitical and were little involved in the movement. This narrative held that teachers were not involved for two primary reasons: (1) they were afraid that open participation in the movement would cause them to lose their jobs; and (2) a victory in the form of school desegregation would result in the closure of all-Black schools and the subsequent loss of their jobs. In her 2015 monograph *Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement*, Loder-

⁶⁹Derrick P. Alridge, *The Educational Thought of W. E. B. Du Bois: An Intellectual History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008); Alridge, "Of Victorianism, Civilizationism, and Progressivism: The Educational Ideas of Anna Julia Cooper and W. E. B. Du Bois, 1892-1940," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), 416-46; Alridge, "Teachers in the Movement: Pedagogy, Activism, and Freedom," *History of Education Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (Feb. 2020), 1-23.

⁷⁰Louis Ray, *Charles H. Thompson: Policy Entrepreneur of the Civil Rights Movement* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2012); Louis Ray, *Charles H. Thompson on Desegregation, Democracy, and Education: 1953-1963* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2020).

⁷¹Sonya Y. Ramsey, *Reading, Writing, and Segregation: A Century of Black Women Teachers in Nashville* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), xi. See also Ramsey's recent authoritative biography about a famous North Carolina educator: Sonya Y. Ramsey, *Bertha Maxwell-Roddey: A Modern-Day Race Woman and the Power of Black Leadership* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2022).

⁷²Ramsey, *Reading, Writing, and Segregation*.

Jackson challenges this prevailing narrative by illuminating the stories of teachers within the context of public acts of protest. Consider the role of Black educators during the Birmingham Children's March: Loder-Jackson writes that "several student activists recalled that teachers supported their activism clandestinely by pretending not to see them leave the classroom, facilitating classroom discussions about their involvement, and refusing to suspend or expel them."⁷³ She later adds that such strategies suggest that teachers were "unconventional" activists, in that they were engaged in "preparing student activists to understand why they were participating in the movement; not impeding students' involvement or jeopardizing their futures with suspensions and expulsions; promoting liberatory education and pedagogy, and debunking the myths of black inferiority."⁷⁴ Thus, while the master narrative has assigned to us conceptions of what constitutes activism—namely, that it is limited to participating in marches or other acts of public protest, Loder-Jackson's work has unearthed a new (counter) narrative: that the classroom did and can serve as a site of resistance, and teachers were at the forefront of this resistance.

Building on the Past: Reaching for the Future

The modern Black freedom struggle has captured the imaginations of the current generation of African American historians of education. By "Black freedom struggle," we refer to the period that encompassed the classical period of the civil rights movement (roughly 1954-1965) and the classical phase of the Black Power movement (1965-1975), as well as some of the earlier antecedents of these movements (1945-1954). These historians have covered diverse subjects during this period, including desegregation, the interplay of policy and schooling, and the impact of the Black Power movement on education. Contemporary educational historians have also revived scholarship on curriculum and pedagogy, as well as opened new pathways for understanding how the schooling of Black children is shaped by the factors of race, gender, and childhood development.

The Modern Black Freedom Struggle

The desegregation of schools was one of the greatest legacies of the modern Black freedom struggle. If we contend the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) sparked the classical phase of the civil rights movement, then it follows that historians of education would exhibit significant interest in writing about *Brown* and its effects. Moreover, for many of the contemporary African American historians of education, their educational backgrounds, professional trajectories, and scholarly interests were a direct consequence of the desegregation of schools, at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

The traditional narrative of school desegregation holds that Black schools closed, Black teachers and administrators were systematically purged, and Black students desegregated historically White schools. This narrative, however, presupposes that

⁷³Tondra Loder-Jackson, *Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 65.

⁷⁴Tondra Loder-Jackson, *Schoolhouse Activists*, 148.

Black students desegregated *public* schools. In *Transforming the Elite: Black Students and the Desegregation of Private Schools*, Michelle Purdy reconstructs the desegregation literature by documenting the experience of Black students who desegregated a private school, The Westminster Schools in Atlanta, Georgia. Purdy interrogates the sociopolitical context of Atlanta that made Westminster's desegregation possible, making the narrative an ideal case study for understanding the desegregation of private institutions. Purdy's scholarship on school desegregation is incredibly significant because private schools were created by Whites to thwart desegregation. Additionally, what makes *Transforming the Elite* particularly compelling is Purdy's use of oral history: by interviewing the students who desegregated The Westminster Schools, readers are provided with firsthand knowledge of what it was like to be the very first minority students in a historically White, private elite school. As evidenced through Purdy's study, the South remains the primary focus of desegregation studies.⁷⁵

In 2020, using a case study of three high schools in Chicago, Dionne Danns shifted the lens of school desegregation to illustrate the process of school desegregation outside the South in *Crossing Segregated Boundaries: Remembering Chicago School Desegregation*. Like Purdy, Danns illuminates how local context shaped school desegregation and its effects. For example, Danns highlights how school desegregation in Chicago literally brought Black students into historically White schools, but did little to disturb segregation beyond school walls because of residential segregation in urban areas like Chicago. Like Purdy, Danns provides a particularly emotive account of school desegregation through her use of oral histories from students who desegregated Von Steuben, Bogan, and Whitney Young High Schools. Moreover, she offers a unique perspective on desegregation by incorporating the perspectives of Latino students, yet another benefit of examining school desegregation outside of the Black-White binary so predominant in discourse about the South. By examining how Chicago implemented the *Brown* decision (Danns argues Chicago's desegregation occurred via school choice), her work lays the groundwork for historians of education to consider how federal laws and policies were implemented, a process she explored in her 2014 book *Desegregating Chicago's Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965-1985*.⁷⁶

Joining Danns in exploring policy implementation is Crystal Sanders in 2016's *A Chance for Change: Head Start and Mississippi's Black Freedom Struggle*. In the book Sanders chronicles the Child Development Group of Mississippi, an activist Head Start program led, managed, and taught by Black women. Head Start was born out of the Economic Opportunity Act signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 as a part of his War on Poverty. Black women in Mississippi seized upon Head Start as an opportunity to center education as a solution to the abject poverty in which Black children in the Mississippi Delta lived. Thus, Sanders's account is especially compelling in revealing how federal domestic policy dovetailed with the civil

⁷⁵Michelle Purdy, *Transforming the Elite: Black Students and the Desegregation of Private Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 2-13.

⁷⁶Dionne Danns, *Crossing Segregated Boundaries: Remembering Chicago School Desegregation* (Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020) and Danns, *Desegregating Chicago's Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965-1985* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

rights movement, and ultimately shaped the Black struggle for freedom in one of the most recalcitrant states in the nation.⁷⁷

Rising educational historian Mahasan Chaney specifically interrogates the intersection of federal education policy and race. Her 2019 dissertation “explores the evolution of federal education policy and particularly the nation’s largest anti-poverty education program, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), to track how federal policy makers framed ideas about education, race, and urban poverty as they pursued federal education reform.”⁷⁸

In 2018, grassroots Black women’s roles in education reform were further highlighted in Elizabeth Todd-Breland’s *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s*. In *A Political Education*, Todd-Breland describes the 2012 teacher strike in Chicago that “ended with the largest intentional mass closure of public schools in U.S. history.”⁷⁹ As many contemporary African American historians of education are apt to do, Todd-Breland historicizes this contemporary event; she uncovers a long history of African Americans organizing for education reform in the Windy City, which has included multiple strategies. While desegregation was one of these strategies, Todd-Breland also reveals how community control and the formation of independent schools characterized Chicago’s battle for quality education. By showing the range of strategies, she asserts that, within the context of education, “African Americans have not only thought different things, but they have also thought *differently* about the same things.”⁸⁰ In other words, African Americans have historically deployed different strategies and ideologies in pursuit of the same goal for their children: a quality education. By being both inclusive of and looking beyond desegregation, Todd-Breland pushed the story of African American education in the mid-twentieth century forward: desegregation was associated with the civil rights movement’s classical phase, community control represented a transient phase, and the formation of independent schools was illustrative of the era of Black Power.

Candace Cunningham explores teacher activism in her 2021 article “‘Hell Is Popping Here in South Carolina’: Orangeburg County Black Teachers and Their Community in the Immediate Post-*Brown* Era.” Cunningham documents how during the 1950s, Black teachers at Elloree Training School in Orangeburg County advocated for equal education for Blacks and the desegregation of schools. One act of resistance included teachers’ refusal to sign an anti-NAACP oath that would have distanced them from the civil rights organization. Such a stance, including efforts to bring

⁷⁷Crystal R. Sanders, *A Chance for Change: Head Start and Mississippi’s Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

⁷⁸Mahasan Chaney, “‘Learn baby Learn,’ Federal Education Policy and the Disciplining Politics of Opportunity: 1965-1999 (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2019).

⁷⁹Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 1.

⁸⁰Sundiata Keith Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, “The ‘Long Movement’ as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 284.

about equality to schools, Cunningham argues, “foreshadowed and laid the groundwork for the 1960s civil rights movement.”⁸¹

In *Audacious Agitation: The Uncompromising Commitment of Black Youth to Equal Education after Brown*, Vincent Willis examines the educational agency of Black youth in southwest Georgia after *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Willis argues that *Brown* was not a panacea for Black youth who would be faced with “the barriers that prevented full participation, equal treatment and equal resources”⁸² in securing their education. A social history with a case-study design, Willis offers detailed stories of Black youth activism and brings his stories to life through archival research and oral histories.

The Black Power era is yet another phase of the modern Black freedom struggle about which African American historians of education have produced significant scholarship. This era is key to understanding the extent to which African Americans curated alternative visions on education that lie outside the boundaries of public education. One of those alternative visions was the formation of independent schools. Although Todd-Breland examined independent schools in her work, Russell Rickford’s 2016 *We Are An African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* was the first book-length exploration of the birth, development, and life of African American-founded private schools, particularly those founded during the Black Power movement.⁸³ An intellectual history that “describes a moment in which cadres of activist-intellectuals saw rethinking schools in poor and working-class communities both as a way to redeem the process of formal learning and as a way to pursue, indeed prefigure, black cultural and political sovereignty,” *We Are an African People* is also an exploration into Black educational thought. Rickford illustrates how the founders of independent Black institutions embraced a variety of forms of Black nationalism, including “pragmatic” nationalism, cultural nationalism, and Pan-African nationalism, that characterized their schools over time.⁸⁴

In 2019’s *Schools of Our Own: Chicago’s Golden Age of Black Private Education*, Worth Kamili Hayes joins Rickford in illuminating how private and independent schooling shaped the African American educational experience during the twentieth century. Chicago is key to understanding the history of Black private schooling because, as Hayes emphasizes, it was “once home to the largest number of private Afrocentric schools in the country.”⁸⁵ Yet Hayes does not limit his exploration of Black private education in Chicago to the Afrocentric schools of the Black Power

⁸¹Candance Cunningham, “‘Hell Is Popping Here in South Carolina’: Orangeburg County Black Teachers and Their Community in the Immediate Post-*Brown* Era,” *History of Education Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (Feb. 2021): 62.

⁸²Vincent D. Willis, *Audacious Agitation: The Uncompromising Commitment of Black Youth to Equal Education after Brown* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2021), 16.

⁸³Note that the founding of private schools by African Americans dates back as early as the antebellum period.

⁸⁴Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

⁸⁵Worth Kamili Hayes, *Schools of Our Own: Chicago’s Golden Age of Black Private Education* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 5.

era; he documents the city's long history of Black private education as well. He chronicles Howalton and the Holy Name of Mary School, liberal arts and religious institutions, respectively; both predated the Afrocentric school (the New Development Concept Center). Furthermore, Hayes concludes his narrative—as does Rickford—by linking the history of Black private schooling in Chicago to contemporary debates around African American school choice.

As illustrated by Rickford and Hayes, Black women were central to the history of Black private schooling. Hayes writes that Black women's "experiences show how private education provided alternative possibilities while also mirroring the oppressive values of the larger society."⁸⁶ Deidre Flowers illuminates the predominant role of Black women in private schooling through examining the life of Mildred Louise Johnson, founder of The Modern School, a private school in Harlem.⁸⁷

One of the coauthors of this article, Alexis Johnson, has also investigated Black independent schooling. Her dissertation includes an examination of an independent contemporary Black postsecondary institution, Nairobi College, established in 1969 in East Palo Alto, California, and ceasing operations in 1979. Moreover, her dissertation, which examines a Black student-led movement for education reform in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s and early 1970s, contributes to the body of literature on Black Power's impact on higher education, a subject on which African Americans historians of education have written.

Through recently published work, Stefan Bradley, joining Joy Williamson-Lott and Eddie Cole as one of the few contemporary African American historians of higher education, focuses his scholarship on Black students' experiences in the Ivy League during the Black freedom struggle, as evidenced in his works *Upending the Ivory Tower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Ivy League* (2018) and *Harlem v. Columbia: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (2010). While Bradley has written on the most exclusive institutions of higher education in the nation, Jelani Favors, in *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (2019), describes historically Black colleges and universities and their role in producing student activists who emerged as leaders in the Black freedom struggle. Through a series of case studies, his narrative traces the roots of Black student activism, from 1837 with the Institute for Colored Youth through the generations of student activists at Tougaloo College (1869-1900), Bennett College (1900-1945), Alabama State University (1930-1960), Jackson State University (1945-1963), Southern University (1930-1966), and North Carolina A&T (1966-1974).

While both Bradley and Favors devote attention to the student activists of the Black freedom struggle, Eddie Cole breaks new ground in *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom* by examining the role of college presidents in the Black freedom struggle. Expanding the purview of civil rights outside the South, he explains how Black and White college presidents contended with issues such as housing discrimination, economic opportunity, free speech, and

⁸⁶Hayes, *Schools of Our Own*, 7.

⁸⁷Deidre Flowers, "A School for Modern Times: Mildred Louise Johnson and the Founding of the Modern School of Harlem," *Journal of African American History* 105, no. 4 (2020), 593-625.

affirmative action.⁸⁸ Though centered in the South, Joy Ann Williamson-Lott's *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order*—while inclusive of the Black freedom struggle—also considers other phenomena, including the “Vietnam War and the knowledge economy,” and reveals how they “dovetailed with powerful internal forces—faculty and student activism—to undermine the traditional role of higher education in the region.”⁸⁹

Curriculum and Pedagogy

While the Black freedom struggle constitutes the bulk of scholarship by the contemporary generation of African American historians of education, it is far from the only topic under inquiry. Another thematic concern of these historians has been curriculum and pedagogy. Representing a resurgence of earlier trends, these new historians break new ground by focusing on the work of Black teachers in curriculum development and pedagogical practice.

Jarvis Givens's 2021 book *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* is of this ilk. Part-biography, part-intellectual history, Givens illustrates how Carter G. Woodson, the “Father of Black History,” created the infrastructure for the teaching of Black history and culture in the segregated Black schools of the Jim Crow era. Givens delves into Woodson's coming of age in the rural coal mines of West Virginia and his early professional years as a teacher. He documents Woodson's establishment of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (from which his Black history work would spring) and his role as a Black educational theorist. Beyond its (re)centering of Woodson as one of the key persons in the history of Black education, the power of Givens's work lies in how it reveals the ways Black teachers served as sort of missionaries of Woodson's work. As “scholars of the practice,” Black teachers brought Woodson's work to life in the segregated classrooms.⁹⁰

One of those teachers was Madeline Stratton Morgan, the subject of Michael Hines's 2022 book, *A Worthy Piece of Work: The Untold Story of Madeline Morgan and the Fight for Black History in Schools*. Hines's work is an ideal follow-up to *Fugitive Pedagogy* as it provides a case study of a Black educator who implemented Black history in the classroom. Morgan, as Hines writes, “led a movement that resulted in the institution of Black history as part of the curriculum of Chicago's public schools, then the second largest school system in the nation. Her work, *The Supplementary Units for the Course of Instruction in Social Studies*, constituted an intellectual campaign against the foundations of American racial prejudice as bold and as necessary as the military effort to confront fascism abroad.”⁹¹ Morgan's

⁸⁸Two biographies on Black college presidents are *Leroy Davis, A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), and Gerald L. Smith, *A Black Educator in the Segregated South: Kentucky's Rufus B. Atwood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

⁸⁹Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 1.

⁹⁰Jarvis R. Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 178; 240.

⁹¹Michael Hines, *A Worthy Piece of Work: The Untold Story of Madeline Morgan and the Fight for Black History in Schools* (New York: Beacon Press, 2022), 10.

work for Black history education occurred alongside the movement for intercultural education during the World War II period; one reason why her work is so compelling is because it featured the usage of Black history within White schools during the Jim Crow era.⁹² Morgan's pedagogy, however, was a short-lived experiment and faded by 1950, "as white authorities abandoned their advocacy for the curriculum Morgan had crafted."⁹³

Ultimately, the works of Givens, Hines, and Ashley Dennis—another rising historian of education—are critical because they illuminate Black women, whether "scholars of the practice" or "historians without portfolio," who "were deeply involved in both history writing and history education as teachers, librarians, journalists, archivists, school founders, and administrators."⁹⁴ It is also clear that Black women were also activists in the sphere of education. As mentioned earlier, we glean this from the work of Elizabeth Todd-Breland and Crystal Sanders; Kabria Baumgartner's 2019 book *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Black Women and Educational Activism in Antebellum America*, covers the activism of Black women and girls in a different era: the nineteenth century. While activism is traditionally associated with public acts of protest—and there were examples of such acts in the antebellum period—Baumgartner's work compels us to expand our conception of what it means to be an activist.⁹⁵ For example, activism meant that "an African American mother trying to enroll her children in school was performing an act of protest; an African American girl daring to rise to the top of her class affirmed that black intelligence was real and material; and an African American female teacher guiding African American children flouted exclusionary school laws."⁹⁶ Baumgartner succeeds in challenging traditional definitions of activism and locating the long history of Black women's educational activism in the Northeast, thereby unsettling the notion that the South was the primary site of Black protest. Additionally, she furthers our understanding of who was involved in improving education Blacks in the Northeast. Moreover, Baumgartner extends the work of previous scholars such as Perkins and so many others who have examined the activism of Black women and girls.

Race, Gender, and Childhood

Baumgartner's work is also significant because she provides examples of Black girls acting as activists to attain educational justice. For example, she writes that in the process of effectively desegregating public schools in antebellum Boston, the "African American girl became an icon for educational justice."⁹⁷ The intersection of schooling and Black girlhood is growing as an area of interest among the new generation of

⁹²Hines, *A Worthy Piece of Work*, xvi.

⁹³Hines, *A Worthy Piece of Work*, xvii.

⁹⁴Hines, *A Worthy Piece of Work*, xiii. Also, see Ashley Dennis, "The Intellectual Emancipation of the Negro: Madeline Morgan and the Mandatory Black History Curriculum in Chicago during World War II," *History of Education Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (May 2022): 136-160.

⁹⁵Kabria Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Black Women and Educational Activism in Antebellum America* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 10.

⁹⁶Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*, 2.

⁹⁷Baumgartner, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*, 10.

African American educational historians, including Lindsey Jones, whose work sits at the intersection of education and the carceral state, in her examination of the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, founded in 1915 by the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.⁹⁸ With her 2021 monograph *Beyond the Boundaries of Childhood: African American Children in the Antebellum North*, Crystal Webster joins Baumgartner and Jones in interrogating the intersection of race, gender, childhood, and schooling. She shares with Baumgartner a focus on the antebellum northeast, and a prescription for challenging notions on what constitutes activism: Webster argues that not only did Black children's labor and their schooling influence the activism of abolitionists and antislavery activists, but also that Black children themselves "acted in political ways through their play, labor, and schooling."⁹⁹ A "social history which focuses on Black children's lives in the transition from slavery to freedom," Webster's study illuminates the precarity of Black childhood, another contemporary subject whose roots lie in generations past.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

In this article, we have shown the contributions of African American historians of education to the study of Black education. African American historians of education have had a profound influence in uncovering, shaping, and telling the stories of the education of Black people. We are pleased to see the emergence of a new generation of young African American historians of education in recent years. They have made significant strides in presenting their work in both the history and the history of education communities. They are also engaging in scholarship in fields like African Studies, vitalizing and revitalizing fields such as intellectual history and the history of higher education, and bringing a great sense of interdisciplinarity to their work.

As we grapple with the plethora of issues facing the education of Black people over the next two decades, we encourage future historians to consider the following:

1. *Local and state studies of the education of Blacks and other underrepresented groups.* Several previous studies have focused on education in Alabama, Georgia, New Jersey, and other states, but most of these studies are now dated.
2. *Produce robust studies that examine educational reform and policy, teachers' work, student life and achievement, and the administration of predominantly Black schools.*
3. *The history of education in the recent past.* Much more work needs to be done on the history of education from the 1970s to the recent past. For instance, great insight on the education of Blacks could be gained by examining educational policy under the Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations.

⁹⁸Lindsey E. Jones, "Not a Place for Punishment": The Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, 1915-1940" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2018); and Lindsey E. Jones, "The Most Unprotected of All Human Beings": Black Girls, State Violence, and the Limits of Protection in Jim Crow Virginia," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society* 20, no. 1 (2018), 14-37.

⁹⁹Crystal Lynn Webster, *Beyond the Boundaries of Childhood: African American Children in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 2.

¹⁰⁰Webster, *Beyond the Boundaries of Childhood*, 2.

4. *The history of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the exploration of Black college life at predominantly White universities.* Until recently, little historical work had examined the history of HBCUs outside the traditional institutional histories sanctioned by the universities themselves. Over the past decades James Anderson, Linda Perkins, Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, and Marybeth Gasman have produced exemplary historical scholarship in this area and have trained other historians of education to research HBCUs. Prospective African American historians should consider the rich history of HBCUs as a potential subject of study. African American educational historians should also consider the history of Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) of higher education, a group of institutions on which our coauthor is an authority.¹⁰¹ PBIs are colleges or universities whose student body is composed of 40 percent or more of Black American students, and that are eligible for discretionary funding through Title III of the Higher Education Act. Although PBIs were granted federal designation as recently as 2008, these institutions have been in existence since the mid-1960s.
5. *Intellectual history and the history of ideas.* Not nearly enough historical work has been done examining the thought and ideas of Black educators, organizations, and institutions. The studies we propose must go far beyond chronicling African American thinkers' contributions to history to interrogate ideas and develop new ways of thinking about Black education, thought, ideology, and culture.
6. *History of education in popular culture.* Historians of education have rarely studied the role of popular culture in the education of youth, instead ceding such studies to scholars in youth or cultural studies. Given the long view historians bring to their work, it is time to examine the concepts of education and pedagogy more broadly. African American youth engage in education in powerful ways outside of institutions, through music, media, social networking, and the Internet, among other mediums. The educational impact of such influences on youth is a subject ripe for exploration by African American historians of education, who should consider them in relation to previous non-institutional modes of learning in the African American community.
7. *Historians of education as public intellectuals.* Although the idea of the public intellectual has become somewhat clichéd, and public intellectuals are sometimes viewed as celebrities and entertainers rather than scholars, it is time for historians of education to disseminate their views to the public by sharing their work in forums beyond academic conferences, scholarly journals, and the halls of academia. In terms of information dissemination, the world is a much different place today than it was only twenty years ago. We encourage African American historians of education to publish op-ed essays, write blogs, produce podcasts, and engage in community-based activities related to education. Such

¹⁰¹Alexis M. Johnson, *The History of Predominantly Black Institutions: A Primer*, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, Center for Minority Serving Institutions research brief, Oct. 2020, 1-10, <https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/History%20of%20PBIs.pdf>.

grassroots efforts will help African American historians of education tremendously in having a voice in educational policy.

8. *Produce digital humanities projects on Black education that provide scholars opportunities to have access to primary source data.* This can be facilitated by online resources and podcasts.

The twenty-first-century African American griot of education lives and works in an exciting and uncertain period in relation to the education of Black people. It is exciting because never before have scholars had the level of access to primary sources and the freedom to travel and have access to and work in archives that are now available to them. Moreover, the field of the history of Black education has gained greater visibility in the past decade as a result of scholars' increased access to primary and secondary materials via the Internet and the engagement of African American historians of education in academic organizations such as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the African American Intellectual History Society, the National Council for Black Studies, and other professional organizations beyond the field of education.

The notion of the African American historian of education as a griot offers a powerful way of thinking about and charting the future of scholarship on the education of Black people. By employing the concept of the griot, we move forward with a clear perspective of the past, present, and future as a seamless history. We must continue to disseminate knowledge to African American communities and bequeath it to subsequent generations. In this way, we will continue to recognize linkages between past, present, and future to understand how our work as historians constitutes part of a broader, ongoing struggle to improve the education of Black people.

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